

Sulfur Mustard

April 2004

Fact Sheet *for residents of Southern Benton County*

Environmental Health Division
Office of Environmental Health Assessments



Sulfur Mustard is called a "blister" agent. It is an oily liquid. It smells like garlic or mustard and ranges in color from yellow to brown. Sulfur Mustard is frozen at temperatures below 57 degrees (F).

How can you be exposed to Sulfur Mustard stored at the depot?

In the unlikely event of an accident, Washington residents would most likely be exposed to Sulfur Mustard by breathing vapors released during an accident.

If an accident is very large, people's skin might be exposed to sulfur mustard as microscopic droplets (aerosols).

Washington citizens will not have direct exposure to liquid after an accident.

What are the health effects of Sulfur Mustard?

Exposure to a small amount of Sulfur Mustard can cause your skin to become red and irritated. If the dose is larger skin will blister.

Sulfur Mustard can damage your eyes. Effects on the eye can include irritation, redness, and swelling of the lids.

Throat irritation, sinus pain, and cough can develop after breathing in Sulfur Mustard. Sulfur Mustard damages the lungs.

When will symptoms of Sulfur Mustard exposure appear?

If you are exposed to Sulfur Mustard, there will be a delay before you feel symptoms. Symptoms normally appear within 4 to 8 hours. However, after small doses symptoms can take up to 24 hours to develop.

What medical treatment will I receive for Sulfur Mustard exposure?

Medical staff can treat you with soothing lotions, eye drops, and pain medication. If infections develop, for example after lung damage, they can give you antibiotics.

Will you need to be decontaminated if there is an accidental release of Sulfur Mustard?

In some cases evacuating residents who have been exposed to Sulfur Mustard will need to

be decontaminated. People can be decontaminated with soap and water.

Who will provide medical treatment and decontaminate residents as they evacuate?

Fire department personnel with special medical training will provide medical aid. Medical screening and treatment will be available at first aid areas along evacuation routes.

If necessary, fire department personnel will also decontaminate you. Portable showers will be set up in special tents with heaters. You will find the showers at first aid areas. Decontamination equipment will also be located at hospitals in the Tri-cities and Prosser and at reception centers for evacuees.

If you have more questions you can call Mike Harris at Benton County Emergency Management (1-800-841-7953), or Koenraad Mariën at the Washington Department of Health 1-877-485-7316 (toll free).